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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to: (1) develop and implement training modules designed to change appropriately certain counseling skills among students enrolled in the counseling practicum; (2) assess the effect of the training modules on certain counseling skills of students; and (3) investigate the effects of modular skill training during the counseling practicum on certain general measures of counseling effectiveness. Experimental and control groups were compared. Measures used were subjects' videotaped role plays; audiotaped counselor sessions; and supervisor self and client ratings. Doctoral students rated the skill acquisition and global effectiveness. The skills training program was expected to show that the counseling practicum students trained in four selected counseling skills would demonstrate a significantly greater gain in these skills than students in the conventional counseling practicum. Also, the researcher expected that practicum students trained in the specific skills approach would demonstrate significantly greater counseling effectiveness on selected global measures than students in the conventional counseling practicum. The results of this study warrant further research concerning the implementation of systematic skills training for counseling practicum students. (Author/NG)

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EFFECTS OF SPECIFIC SKILLS TRAINING UPON COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS WITHIN THE COUNSELING PRACTICUM

Today, accountability is being emphasized for those people rendering services in the helping professions. Researchers and practitioners have demonstrated the need for a more systematic, controlled representation of the counseling process. Rather than entirely dealing with a global process, the emphasis is to develop different component skills within the process for each individual. Ivey (1971) suggests a skills training model which could be adaptable to the needs of the helping professions. This model is an attempt at a specific, systematic form of training aimed at improving the counselor's skills. Ivey (1973) also recommends that a microcounseling format could be adapted to the counselor's personal and theoretical orientation in a variety of settings and situations. The microcounseling paradigm seems to provide a viable contribution and could be the first step toward a more natural, continual development necessary for effectiveness as a counselor.

How does a specific approach to skills training relate to overall counseling effectiveness? What are some basic skills which helping professions practitioners can be expected to competently demonstrate? How can a variety of assessment devices (incorporating audiotapes, videotapes, and rating scales) and statistics (t-test, analysis of variance, and analysis of covariance) be utilized to measure skills development and counseling effectiveness? These questions are directly related to this study.

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This study investigates the implementation of specific (microcounseling) skills training within the counseling practicum at the University of Georgia during the Fall and Winter quarters of the 1974-75 academic year. It further investigates the results of the skills training and the effect of the training upon overall counseling effectiveness. This study attempts to go beyond most related studies reviewed in the literature by assessing the effect of the skills training upon overall counselor effectiveness (with clients in the practicum field setting). Assessments with seven of eight hypotheses in the areas of the specific skills and overall counseling effectiveness were made with actual master's level counselor trainees and clients in a variety of practicum settings (college or university, correctional, mental health, and public school).

The purpose of this study was to: 1) develop and implement training modules designed to change appropriately certain counseling skills among students enrolled in the counseling practicum; 2) assess the effect of the training modules upon certain counseling skills of students; and 3) investigate the effects of modular skill training during the counseling practicum upon certain general measures of counseling effectiveness.

The first level of conceptual hypotheses (Hypotheses 1-4) stated that specific training in selected counseling skills (attending, open invitation to talk, minimal encourages to talk, and listening) would enable counseling practicum students (experimental group) to demonstrate significantly greater gain in these skills than students in the conventional counseling practicum (control group). The second level of conceptual hypotheses (Hypotheses 5-8) stated that practicum students trained in the specific skills approach would demonstrate significantly greater counseling effectiveness on selected global measures (Global Communications Scale, Gazda; supervisor and self-ratings,

Myrick and Kelly; and client ratings, Ivey) than students in the conventional counseling practicum. A null hypothesis at either level was rejected at the .10 level of significance. A related t-test was used to evaluate Hypothesis 1. Hypotheses 2-5 were evaluated using analysis of covariance, while analysis of variance was used with Hypotheses 6-8.

The experimental design involved pre- and post-measures for only the experimental group (Hypothesis 1), the comparison of pre- post-measures for both experimental and control groups (Hypotheses 2-5), and the comparison of only post-measures between the experimental and control groups (Hypotheses 6-8).

This study had a total N of 28. The experimental group had an N of 15 while the control group had an N of 13. Measures were obtained through the use of subjects' videotaped roleplays (Hypothesis 1), audiotaped counseling sessions (Hypotheses 2-5), and supervisor, self, and client ratings (Hypotheses 6-8).

Three doctoral students served as trainers for the experimental group in four skills. Two separate panels of three and five doctoral students served as judges for rating the pre- and post-observations of the four skills and a global measure of counseling effectiveness.

The summary of the results for the first level hypotheses is as follows: 1) attending behavior (Hypothesis 1) increased significantly as predicted; 2) open invitation to talk (Hypothesis 2) demonstrated a significant pre-post difference between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group; and 3) there was no significant pre-post difference on minimal encourages to talk and listening (Hypotheses 3 and 4) between the experimental and control groups.

The summary of the results for the second level hypotheses is as follows: 1) as demonstrated through the Global Communications Scale (Hypothesis 5), there was no significant pre-post difference between the experimental and

control groups; 2) the post-supervisor and post-client ratings (Hypotheses 6 and 8) for the experimental group were not significantly higher than those ratings for the control group; and 3) a significant difference between post-experimental and post-control self-ratings (Hypothesis 7) resulted in favor of the experimental group.

The results of this study were encouraging enough to warrant further research concerning the implementation of systematic skills training for counseling practicum students. Also, further research should be concerned with the effect of the skills training upon the counselor's level of general counseling effectiveness.

The following specific recommendations considering the present study and future research attempts are offered:

1) future research could focus on the individual's skill attainment rather than group differences and comparisons. An experimental case study research design is a possible alternative. Prior to the implementation of a skills training format, a training program could assess the backgrounds and needs of the individual students;

2) other studies could focus more specifically on trainer, seminar leader, supervisor, and client qualities as related to a skills training approach. The effect of these variables upon the skills training results could be studied;

3) continued follow-up concerning the progress of the subjects could be initiated over a period of time within the subjects' actual work settings. The level of skill development and level of counseling effectiveness could be assessed months after the counseling practicum;

4) a systematic form of skills training could be initiated within a training program before the student enrolls in a practicum; and

5) a systematic form of skills training could be implemented in a variety of settings with different groups of people. Administrators, professionals, paraprofessionals, and laymen in university, mental health, public school, agency, correctional, and industrial settings could benefit from the training.

Detailed results of the statistical analyses and analysis of the procedures and logistical concerns are available for those interested. For example, for assessment purposes there were 30 (thirty) 10-minute, videotaped segments associated with Hypothesis 1, 228 five-minute, videotaped segments for Hypotheses 2-4, and 643 five-minute, audiotaped segments for Hypothesis 5. A copy of the training procedures, the training videotape, and modular descriptions related to each of the four skills are available.

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Means and Standard Deviations Associated with Each Hypothesis (Dimension) for the Experimental and Control Groups

	Experimental (N = 15)				Control (N = 13)			
Dimension	Pre $\bar{x}$	Pre SD	Post $\bar{x}$	Post SD	Pre $\bar{x}$	Pre SD	Post $\bar{x}$	Post SD
Attending Behavior	3.55	.36	4.01	1.06				
Open Invitation To Talk	1.27	.31	1.64	.64	1.27	.42	1.23	.39
Minimal Encourages To Talk	2.23	1.69	2.46	1.66	1.90	1.42	1.72	.78
Listening	1.33	.27	1.74	.99	2.23	1.29	1.59	.74
Global Scale	1.92	.15	1.97	.16	1.91	.20	1.91	.14
Supervisor Rating			159.80	13.37			160.90	15.24
Self-Rating			167.40	17.08			156.70	11.93
Client Rating			118.30	7.58			119.10	9.55